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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [WFP](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: ROKG RELUCTANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO WFP PROGRAM IN DPRK

REF: A. STATE 78613
[1](#)B. SEOUL 1557

Classified By: A/POL Brian McFeeters. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (U) Action Request: See paragraph 4.

[1](#)2. (C) On June 8, A/POL delivered ref A points recommending that the ROKG contribute to the WFP's DPRK program as soon as possible despite the lack of DPRK enthusiasm for the idea, to Cho Byung-jae, Director-General for North American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT). Cho's main response was to say that the ROKG was reluctant to contribute to the WFP now because the contribution would call attention to the DPRK's difficult food situation and could lead some in the ROKG to press for immediate bilateral rice assistance (the 400,000 metric tons concessionary loan that is on hold). He also asked why the WFP was not making an emergency worldwide appeal and suggested that the WFP approach the ROKG directly.

[1](#)3. (C) Separately, Kim Joon-hwan, Assistance Cooperation Team Director at the Ministry of Unification (MOU), told poloff in response to ref A points that the ROKG was reviewing whether now was the appropriate time to give a contribution to North Korea via the WFP. At the May 29-June 1 inter-Korean ministerial talks, the ROKG had held firm and delayed its bilateral rice assistance to send a unified message on the need for the DPRK to implement the February 13 "Initial Actions" agreement, in accord with USG messages. In order to maintain close coordination, Kim asked what kind of contribution the USG was considering making to the WFP.

[1](#)4. (C) Post requests guidance on responding to ROKG questions about whether the USG is planning on making a contribution to the WFP for North Korea.

COMMENT

[1](#)5. (C) As a point of clarification, although MOFAT and MOU contacts did not bring up the point on June 8, we believe their earlier comments still stand, namely that WFP aid would be considered in addition to, rather than as a replacement or reduction of, bilateral aid. On May 18, MOFAT Director-General Cho Byung-jae had told us that any potential ROKG assistance given through the WFP could not be an alternative to bilateral rice aid because (1) the ROKG had

committed to providing 400,000 metric tons of rice aid at the February 27-March 2 inter-Korean Ministerial; and (2) bilateral rice aid was technically a loan, rather than (grant) humanitarian assistance (ref B). END COMMENT.
STANTON